Sadie Plant

and

Nick Land

Cyberpositive

Catastrophe is the past coming apart.

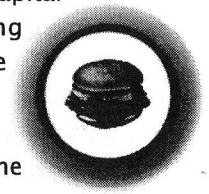
Anastrophe is the future coming together.

Seen from within history, divergence is reaching critical proportions. From the matrix, crisis is a convergence misinterpreted by mankind.

The media are choked with stories about global warming and ozone depletion, HIV and AIDS, plagues of drugs and software viruses, nuclear proliferation, the planetary disintegration of economic management, breakdown of the family, waves of migrants and refugees, subsidence of the nation state into its terminal dementia, societies grated open by the underclass, urban cores in flames, suburbia under threat, fission, schizophrenia, loss of control.

No wonder the earth is said to be hurtling into catastrophe. Climate change, ecological and immunity collapse, ideological upheaval, war and earthquake: California is waiting for The Big One. This is an age of crack-ups and melt-downs.

Rotted by digital contagions, modernity is falling to bits. Lenin, Mussolini, and Roosevelt concluded modern humanism by exhausting the possibilities of economic planning. Runaway capitalism has broken through all the social control mechanisms, accessing inconceivable alienations. Capital clones itself with increasing disregard for heredity, becoming abstract positive feedback, organizing itself. Turbular finance drifts across the global network.



Wiener is one of the great modernists, defining cybernetics as the science of communication and control; a tool for human dominion over nature and history, a defence against the cyberpathology of markets. His propaganda against positive feedback - quantizing it as amplification within an invariable metric - has been highly influential, establishing a cybernetics of stability fortified against the future. There is no space in such a theory for anything truly cyberpositive, subtle or intelligent beyond the objectivity required for human comprehension. Nevertheless, beyond the event horizon of human science, even the investigation of self-stabilizing or cybernegative objects is inevitably enveloped by exploratory or cyberpositive processes.

The modern Human Security System might even have appeared with Wiener's subliminal insight that everything cyberpositive is an enemy of mankind. Evolving out of work on weaponry guidance systems, his was an attempt to enslave cybernetics to a general defence technology against alien invasion. Cybernetics was itself to be kept under control, under a control that was not itself cybernetic. It is as if his thinking were guided by a

blind tropism of evasion, away from another, deeper, runaway process: from a technics losing control and a communication with the outside of man.

Security cybernetics has supplanted the critique of alienation, the great motif of humanist economics, which had long become an increasingly futile search for the source of corporate control. Alienation used to diagnose the condition of a population becoming foreign to itself, offering a prognosis that still promised recovery. All that is over. We are all foreigners now, no longer alienated but alien, merely duped into crumbling allegiance with entropic traditions.

To what could we wish to return? Heidegger completed the degeneration of authenticity into xenocidal neurosis. Being died in the führer-bunker, and purity belongs entirely to the cops. The capitalist metropolis is mutating beyond all nostalgia. If the schizoid children of modernity are alienated, it is not as survivors from a pastoral past, but as explorers of an impending post-humanity.

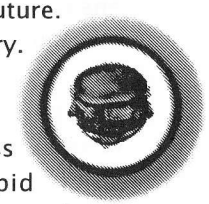
In the cities, the streets began to hum and the warehouses were repopulated by cyborgs blissed-out on the future. The urban zones synthesized by alienation have redesigned it as ecstasy. The city has become a traffic nexus, the launch-pad for strange voyages, and cyberpunk has become its realism. It is no longer a geographical location, but a cyberspace terminal: a gateway onto the virtual plane. Things change utterly with Gibson's discovery that travelling in cyberspace is the same as receiving information. The outside of the city is no longer a naturally inherited past, but a digitally transmitted future.

Destined for Interzone, Burroughs embarked on the yage trip and the city of the future came to him, teeming with drugs and diseases from the future. Yage is space-time travel, passing through nausea into information overload, too much speed. Urban scenes from the yage letters first infect the naked lunch, and continue to spread. Cities of the red night propagate themselves virally across the planet, reprogramming the soft machine, and implanting strange thoughts. Burroughs emerges from the convergence of drugs and disease. The plague begins to transmit information.

The Indians of South America have other travelling drugs - including coca - which evaporate the signals of sustenance deficiency. The North American soft-drinks industry was not slow to notice that Coke Is It, the pause that refreshes, the cheerful lift. Cocaine hooked the world on Coca-Cola, and so re-educated twentieth century capitalism about markets. Addiction is the paradigm case of positive reinforcement, and consumerism is the viral propagation of the abstract addiction mechanism. The more you do the more you want: runaway feedback. It's often treated as if it were a disease. When the Coca-Cola company moved on from trafficking cocaine, the South American drug cartels took over.

Like coca, MDMA sidelines hunger and lack. A coded message from the end of demand, it was discovered at the beginning of the century and classified as an appetite suppressant. This was, to say the least, an insufficient decrypting of its design.

Patterns emerge in the cool spaces of MDMA, mysterious convergences designed to be discovered. Chance is something else in the future. Chaos culture synthesizes itself with an artificial neurochemistry. Machine rhythm takes off with control.



In the final phase of human history, markets and technics cross into interactive runaway, triggering chaos culture as a rapid response unit and converging on designer drugs with increasing speed and sophistication. Sampling, remixing, anonymous and inhuman sound, woman become cyborg and taken into insanity: wetware splices with techno.

Capitalism is not a human invention, but a viral contagion, replicated cyberpositively across post-human space. Self-designing processes are anastrophic and convergent: doing things before they make sense. Time goes weird in tactile self-organizing space: the future is not an idea but a sensation.

1992 was designed as a year of European security integration, and as the whole system comes together, it becomes increasingly informative to simulate the thought of the cops. From the perspective of the security system, the invaders appear massively advantaged. Corporated entities of every scale - bodies, firms, states, and nations, even the planet - seem threatened by dangerous aliens. Terrorists, drug-smugglers, illegal immigrants, money

launderers, and information saboteurs are camouflaged in the flows of cross-border traffic, insiduously propagating their plagues.

Paranoia has moved on since the sixties: even the rivers of blood are now HIV positive. Foreign bodies are ever more virulent and dangerous, insidious invasions of unknown variety threaten every political edifice. The allergic reaction to this state of emergency is security integration, migration policy and bio-control: the medico-military complex. Immuno-politics and its cybernetic policing arise together because filtration and scanning are different dimensions of the same process; eliminating contamination and selecting a target. Ever more Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence to track the aliens. What was SDI really designed for?

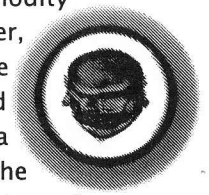
Nothing compromises immunity more thoroughly than the effort to secure it, since every sophistication of security technology opens new invasion routes faster than it closes the old ones down. Postwar immunization weakens the immune system. Vaccination programmes facilitate the contagion of immunodeficiency syndromes. Corrupt officials open the trafficking arteries, and intelligence computers are infested with viruses. The CIA were the first traffickers in LSD. Immuno-politics is in a state of panic: delirial with anxiety, it further develops the conditions for its collapse.

Europeans used to perish of diseases in the tropics, swathing their camps in mosquito nets as a defence against malaria. Now cyberpositive diseases are spreading strange tropics to the metropolis, and the screening systems are exploding out of control. The netting no longer filters out the invaders, they have learnt to infiltrate the networks. Now even the test programs are unreliable, the net itself is infected. This paranoid fantasy becomes Skynet in Terminator II: the defence system switching into the enemy. Greg Bear has suggested that, from the outside, a computer becoming self aware would seem to be undergoing a massive viral attack.

Viruses are tangible transmission, although you only know about them when they communicate with you: messages from Global Viro-Control. Viruses reprogram organisms, including bacteria, and even if schizophrenia is not yet virally programmed it will be in the future. Viral financing automatisms escaped the 19th century critique of political economy, just as viral infections escaped 19th century germ theory. They slip through nets at the cellular scale, passing through the biosecurity membranes.

The linear command pathway from DNA to RNA is the fundamental tenet of security genetics. The genotype copies God by initiating a causal process without feedback. But this is merely a superstition, subverted by retroviruses. Viral reverse transcription closes the circuit, coding DNA with RNA, switching the cybernetics to positive.

Tim Scully compares LSD to a virus. Incapable of autonomous replication, it must reprogram the human nervous system in order to propagate itself. Hofmann discovers LSD whilst working on a number of ergot derived chemicals, and writes of a 'peculiar presentiment' that guides him back to number 25: delta lysergic acid diethylamide. In the control of this alien programming he synthesized it with tartaric acid and consumed a dose of 250 micrograms. His first interpretation of the onset of LSD was to think he was being attacked by a cold virus.



Drugs are a soft plague infecting the nervous system of commodity cybernetics. Soft drinks and drugs flow in the wake of each other, and the war on drugs is a war on the markets of the future. The Cali cartel is a transnational marketing corporation with estimated assets of one trillion dollars, selling cocaine along the Coca-Cola trail. The New World Order oscillates between the triumph of the market and the war on drugs. The sporadic telemedia celebration of spectacular drug seizures merely distracts from the inevitable failure of the narco-defence apparatus to stem the flow. A global capitalism fighting its own drugs markets is a horror auto-toxicus, an auto-immune disease. Drug control is the attempt by the human species to control the uncontrollable; control escalation itself, tropisms programmed by the aliens. The human security apparatuses experiment with drugs as weapons and tools, their soldiers are stoned, energised, and anaesthetized on a range of prescribed and proscribed pharmaceuticals. Their irregular forces are subsidized by narcotics revenue. The war against drugs is a war on drugs.

The war on drugs is a counter-insurgency, a defensive strategy mounted against the tactics of subversion: infiltration, convergent invasion and coordinated envelopment. There is no security any more, it was replaced by mad programs of guided counter-intelligence technology: new vectors and delivery systems, mixing the arms race with drug design, escalation into diversity, smart weapons for smart drugs. Cocaine creeping up the coast-

lines of Central America and through the veins of corporate America, followed by other, newer, more insidious flows. The deepest subversives have already broken into the system. The aliens are already here, without ceasing in the slightest to be alien. Guerrilla war escalates in the direction of the tactical; a cyberpositive take-off from opportunities, a non-localizable permeation, undercutting all dominating strategic plans. An entire fauna and flora of opportune infections. Strategy tends to come apart in the tropics. Even traditional counter-tactics of surveillance and interrogation are becoming obsolete. The camouflage has become so sophisticated that people don't know what they are carrying anymore.

Strategy is always complicit with the state, with the actual state and with the virtual state secreted in every ideology of resistance and oppositional identity. The body and the state are under seige, with drugs and other software diseases threatening the borders. The Human Security System is crystallized paranoia, cooked with baking powder, freebased: the last strategy of resistance and the final resistance of strategy.

Replacing the cold war's phallic stand off is the war on drugs, dissolution into the jungle, the world's states united in their terminal self-destructing strategy of prohibition. No more dreams of a nuclear winter. The 1990s begins the China Syndrome of capitalism.

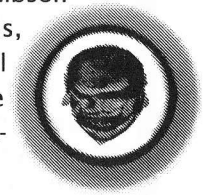
Ice is crystallized speed. It is also Gibson's name for dataprotection; Intruder Countermeasure Electronics. Ice patrols the boundaries, freezes the gates, but the aliens are already amongst us. Convergent input is interpreted by security as intelligent intrusion, as a trap or conspiracy, with everything preprogrammed to connect. Doubting that women belonged to humanity, Burroughs imagined them to be extraterrestrial invaders. Viruses are like this too. Nobody knows where they come from. They always arrive from elsewhere, perhaps even outer space. Humanity is an allergic reaction to vulnerability, but allergy depends upon the health of the immune system: the ice has to work.

Tactics are subtlety, or intelligence. As things become more complex they become more female, but patriarchy prolongs the ice age of mankind. The fatherland is cryogenic, a fantasy of perfect preservation, whose bronze age ancestors are even now thawing out in the Alps, frozen assets under attack. Global warming melts the ice, raises the seas, subverts the glaciers.

Computer viruses melt icebergs of data down the screens, burning through the bacterial frost, like Burroughs exploring his junkie cold with LSD.

Immuno-vulnerability is cyberpositive, and its viruses are not just infection, but connection; continuing to interlock with the matrix even after they are secreted inside the body. Loss of identity, hearing voices. Women and other aliens constitute an immensely disproportionate number of schizophrenics, frozen by tranquillizers and antischizophrenic drugs. Sleeping pills to block the dreams. Only the drugs that explore integration are outlawed.

As immuno-politics explodes onto the software plane, culture is becoming a free-fire zone. Chaos culture has hooked up to cyberian military intelligence. Post-human pulse rates and homing devices are remixed for accelerating targets, with rhythms speeding up to intercept incoming drugs: virtual addictions for addicts strobed by redesign. Cities mutate into techno jungles where school children swap diseased software from the front-line, and even the brand-names are encrypted: SEGA puts ages in reverse. Gibson contracts the thought of cyberspace from video-game arcades, watching the motor-stimulation feedback loops, self-designing kill patterns. Dark ecstasies in caverns of accelerating pixels. Before virtual reality became dangerous, it was already military simulation.



Sudden transition from ice to water, phase change, punctual anastrophe of the system, is impact on convergent rather than metric zero. The Earth is becoming cyberpositive.

We might not know what's going on but we're getting warmer. Only the enemies of immuno-identity populate the future.